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# YOUTH ALTERNATIVE EMPLOYMENT

**(A JOB CREATION AND COMMUNITY SERVICE PROPOSAL FOR  
UNEMPLOYED YOUTH)**

Brotherhood of St Laurence  
67 Brunswick Street, Fitzroy, 3065

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"There is no evidence to suggest that young people are not motivated to work. Contact with young, unemployed people reveals their sense of frustration and failure in their own eyes, as well as in the attitudes of their families and society. They see no sense of purpose before them in life and fall into a routine punctuated by sending Unemployment Benefits' forms back by a certain date."

Cities' Commission on Unemployed  
Youth in Geelong, 1975.

"Generally the interviewers saw these young people as passing through a phase of partial disengagement from the institutions of the larger society, including employment. They considered most of them to be temporarily out of the work force rather than unemployed in the usual sense; mostly their disengagement seemed to be both temporary and self-limiting. Essentially they were doing what young people have always done in some way or other; sorting themselves out, deciding who they were, what they wanted to do with their lives and for what reason, broadening their experience, testing themselves, trying different things and learning by trial and error what suited them."

Poverty Inquiry Research Report on  
the Long-Term Unemployed, 1975.

"Contrary to general public belief, the young people in our sample, almost without exception, expressed frustration and boredom about being unemployed. Many have been unemployed for extremely long periods and are often finding considerable difficulty getting into the work force after leaving school. The habits they have acquired of sleeping late, moping about, and generally being aimless, are disconcerting to them and militate against eventual work adjustment."

Brotherhood of St Laurence Research  
Study on the Unemployed, 1975.

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## INTRODUCTION

Indications are that there will be a massive increase in the numbers of young people unemployed at the end of the year. The Minister for Housing and Construction, Mr Riordan, has predicted:

"We expect that about 250,000 school leavers will be coming on to the labour force at the end of the year. The Department expects that about 80,000 of them will be registered with the Commonwealth Employment Services as unemployed." (1)

In September, 1975, there were already 88,572 young people registered as unemployed with the Commonwealth Employment Service. (2)

In August, 1975, of persons aged 15-19 years in the work force, about one in eight was unemployed (11.9%) (3)

The long-term consequences of young people being unemployed for a long time include:

- (a) Loss of faith in society and government.
- (b) Development of anti-work attitudes.
- (c) Development of habits that would mitigate against future employment.
- (d) Damage to feelings of self-esteem.
- (e) Family tensions arise as young people fail to get employed.
- (f) Trouble with the law. With nowhere to go and nothing to do larceny and vandalism is a potential development.
- (g) Getting used to managing on benefits and seeing no advantage in working for a slightly higher income in a routine job when they have no particular skill to sell.

### PROPOSAL

The Australian Government should agree to establish and fund a job creation program for unemployed youth to undertake community service work.

### PRECEDENTS

The traditional approaches to job creation are through the use of fiscal and monetary measures (taxation, tariffs, control of money supply and direct financial incentives to industry). In recent years, however, Governments have accepted the additional need to create jobs for the unemployed.

In the recession of 1970-71, the Liberal Party Government introduced an unemployment relief scheme which provided short-term employment for unemployed workers in non-metropolitan areas. In September, 1972, there were 15,000 people employed under this scheme. The 1972 budget included an estimate of \$72 million for unemployment relief in 1972-73. The scheme was phased out as the employment situation improved.

In the recession of 1974, the Labor Government introduced the Regional Employment scheme to provide employment for the unemployed. At the end of July, 1975, there were 31,969 people employed under R.E.D.

This scheme is also being phased out although the employment situation is not improving.

The situation of unemployed young people has also led to the creation of specific programs aimed at employing young people.

In the United Kingdom, COMMUNITY INDUSTRY was established in 1972 to help cope with the problem of unemployed young people. At present, the scheme provides 3,000 jobs and a 50 per cent expansion has been announced to help cope with the effects of Britain's near-record 1½ million unemployed.

In Canada, OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH was established in 1971 also to help cope with the problem of unemployed young people. This year approximately \$27,500,000 will be used to provide jobs for 20,000 young people.

In Australia, a Youth Involvement Program (Y.I.P.) was initiated by the Australian Government Department of Tourism and Recreation in 1973-74. Between December, 1974 and February, 1975, 200 young people participated in Y.I.P. in each capital city. In the A.C.T., each participant was paid \$150 for the six week period of their project. In Victoria, they were paid \$160.

In the May, 1974 Federal election, the then Leader of the Federal Opposition, Mr Snedden, proposed an Australian Aid Corps scheme for young people to undertake community service work. The proposal was a revamped version of a proposed civilian alternative to National Service put up by Mr Lynch when he was Minister for Labour and National Service in 1972.

Successful precedents exist for the establishment of a new creation and community service program. The difference between Community Industry, Opportunities for Youth program and the Youth Involvement Program need to be stressed. The latter concentrated on providing a service to the community and helping the personal development of the young people involved. While concerned with both these objectives, the former are equally concerned with the needs of young people for satisfactory and adequately paid work. It is the difference between pocket money as under the Youth Involvement Program and an adequate wage as under Community Industry and Opportunities for Youth.

#### OBJECTIVES

- (a) To reduce the number of young people obliged to exist on unemployment benefits.
- (b) To create opportunities for young people who would otherwise be on unemployment benefit to earn a reasonable wage.
- (c) To create jobs that contribute to the welfare of the community through the development of new facilities and services.
- (d) To provide unemployed young people with opportunities for developing experience and skills in initiating planning, taking responsibility for and carrying out work projects.

OBJECTIVES (Cont'd.)

- (e) To be of benefit to the community through the projects undertaken.

CRITERIA

- (i) Any young person, aged up to 21, or youth organisation may submit an application.
- (ii) Projects should create employment for unemployed youth.
- (iii) Preferences would be given to unemployed youth, who have not been in the work force longer than six months.
- (iv) The employment created should be over and above that which would normally take place without Y.A.E.
- (v) The proposee of a project would submit a detailed prescription of proposed projects covering:
  - (a) The philosophy and purpose of the project.
  - (b) The nature of the work to be undertaken.
  - (c) Whether or not the proposed project would normally take place without Y.A.E.
  - (d) How the project will meet a community need.
  - (e) Whether the project is a new solution to an old problem.
  - (f) Whether a new service is being created or existing services continued.
  - (g) The staffing proposals of the project.
  - (h) The cost of the project.
  - (i) The expected commencement date.
  - (j) The expected completion date.
  - (k) The ongoing consequences of the project for the youth employed and the community served.

- (vi) Applicants must demonstrate that their projects will be soundly and efficiently managed.
- (vii) Proposals must be capable of rapid implementation after signing of the contract approving the project.

### PROJECTS

Examples of projects which indicate the kind of contribution that could be made to job creation and to community welfare by Y.A.E:

- \* Compiling a directory of youth services.
- \* Establishing an Arts and Crafts Centre so that teenagers could participate in creative activities of their choice.
- \* Providing and running a drop-in centre for youth.
- \* Building an adventure playground.
- \* Providing help and company for senior citizens, to improve lines of communication and understanding and to create a community awareness amongst the members of youth organisations.
- \* Work experience in private industry - subsidising employers to enable young people and employers to assess their abilities and interests.
- \* Organising work teams to carry out repairs and maintenance work and gardening for elderly citizens.
- \* Assisting in the production of book tapes for blind people.
- \* Helping to carry out road safety programs for municipalities.
- \* Supplementing municipal programs by improving parks, gardens and recreational amenities.
- \* Planning and providing visiting and recreational programs for patients in mental hospitals.
- \* Work experience in Government departments.
- \* Helping schools with clerical jobs and special projects.

- \* Carrying out a survey in a local area to find out the availability of rooms and other accommodation for people in need of housing.
- \* Recruiting donors for blood banks.
- \* Providing programs of historical research involving interviewing local residents and collecting material of value for local historians.

#### ORGANISATION

Y.A.E. would operate in each State and be funded by the Australian Government.

The State Governments would establish State Y.A.E. Committees to administer the scheme, receive submissions and determine which projects were funded.

Membership of the State Y.A.E. Committee should include representatives of appropriate State and Australian Government Departments and, in order to gain community support, representatives of State affiliates of the National Youth Council and the State Councils of Social Service should also be included on the committees.

#### COST

In criticizing the Regional Employment Development scheme (R.E.D.), State Governments criticized the administrative overheads and argued that if State Governments had been given sufficient autonomy to administer the scheme, then administrative costs could have been reduced to a minimum and perhaps even absorbed under existing overheads. By delegating responsibility to committees formed by State Governments, administrative costs would be reduced to a minimum. Decision making would be facilitated and flexibility in approach maximised.

The major cost of the scheme will depend on the rate of pay, the duration of the scheme and the numbers employed.



It is suggested that a standard rate of pay be established for Y.A.E. workers. This should be related to an appropriate equivalent wage rate established for unskilled junior employees. Quite obviously, the higher the rate, the higher the cost of the scheme. Equally obviously, the more that are employed under the scheme, there will be a proportionate increase in the scheme's cost.

The cost of Y.A.E. depends, therefore, on the basic rate (\$60 or \$75 or \$100), the numbers employed (2,500 or 5,000 or 10,000) and the duration of the scheme (3 months, 6 months). Provision will also have to be made for administrative costs. The cost of the scheme could vary between \$1,800,000 and \$18,000,000.

It is not for us to determine what a basic rate should be except to say that it should be substantially more than unemployment benefits for otherwise there would be a disincentive factor inherent to the scheme. On the duration of the scheme, however, it is suggested that projects should be for a six months period and that individuals employed under Y.A.E. should be employed for the duration of the project.

COST X RATE X NUMBERS X 6 MONTHS

<u>Rate</u>	<u>Numbers Employed</u>	<u>Time Period</u>	<u>Total Cost</u>
\$60	10,000	6 months	\$14,400,000
\$60	5,000	6 "	7,200,000
\$60	2,500	6 "	3,600,000

COST COMPARISON OF PAYING UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS OF \$36 PER WEEK AND  
PAYING A Y.A.E. WAGE RATE OF \$60

Number of young people	Cost of receiving U.B. x 6 months	Cost of working under Y.A.E. x \$60 x 6 mths.
2,500	\$2,160,000	\$3,600,000
5,000	4,320,000	7,200,000
10,000	8,640,000	14,400,000

As it can be seen, the cost of Y.A.E. would be reduced by the saving in the cost of unemployment benefits.

EXPERIMENTAL SCHEME

It would be advisable to introduce the scheme on an experimental basis and this would mean deliberately limiting the size of the scheme. It is important that the proposed scheme receive widespread backing throughout the community. It is equally important that the scheme be given an adequate testing period and perhaps two years would meet this purpose.

EVALUATION

The Social Policy Section of the Department of Labour and Immigration could be requested to conduct an evaluation of Y.A.E. over the two years period.

This evaluation should be conducted in each State in conjunction with the respective State Councils of Social Service.

The evaluation would attempt to generally assess Y.A.E. in achieving its objectives and specifically assess the individual projects in achieving their objectives.

ACTION

The Australian Government should prepare proposals for a Y.A.E. scheme and, as a priority, discuss these with State Governments, community and youth organisations in order that the program will be introduced at the beginning of next year.

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